DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 358 401 CG 024 893

AUTHOR Tran, Shannon; And Others
TITLE Acculturation and Ethnic Minority Differences in Well-Being among College Students.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Psychological Association (72nd, Portland, OR, April 30-May 3, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Acculturation; Anglo Americans; Asian Americans; *Cultural Differences; *Ethnic Groups; Higher Education; Hispanic Americans; *Undergraduate Students; *Well Being; White Students
IDENTIFIERS Hispanic American Students

ABSTRACT

Asian-American, Hispanic-American, and Anglo college students were compared on measures of psychological well-being. In Study 1, 47 Asian-American and 89 Anglo male and female undergraduate students were compared on a variety of psychological scales. The main difference found between groups was that Asian Americans scored higher on avoidance than did Anglos. It was hypothesized that acculturation may have obscured some ethnic differences. To control for this, the Asian-American group was divided into two subgroups assumed to differ in degree of acculturation based on whether the primary language at home was English (N=21) or not English (N=25). Lower avoidance, loneliness, and neuroticism, but high esteem scores, were found among Asian Americans whose primary home language was English in comparison to those for whom the native language was used at home. In addition, Asian Americans from homes where English was spoken had scores on psychological well-being variables comparable to those found in Anglo students. A similar comparison of Hispanic-American (N=37) students and Anglo students (N=89) showed that Hispanics, as a whole, differed from Anglos only in having lower agreeableness scores. More highly acculturated Hispanics (N=22) and Anglos were both less avoidant and higher in seeking social support than were less acculturated Hispanics (N=15). (Author/NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED358401

Acculturation and Ethnic Minority Differences in Well-being Among College Students

Shannon Tran, Jan Hoang, Faye Docuyanan, and John Jung

California State University, Long Beach

Running Head: Acculturation and Well-Being

CG024893

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

John Jung

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ABSTRACT

This study compared Asian-American, Hispanic-American, and Anglo students on psychological well-being. In Study 1, 47 Asian American and 89 Anglo male and female undergraduate students were compared on a variety of psychological scales. The main difference between Anglos and the Asian Americans, as a group, was that the latter scored higher on avoidance. Because acculturation may have obscured some ethnic differences, we next divided the Asian American group into two subgroups assumed to differ in degree of acculturation based on whether the primary language at home was English (N=21) or not English (N=25). Lower avoidance, loneliness, neuroticism, but higher esteem scores were found among Asian-Americans whose primary home language was English in comparison to those for whom the native language was used at home. In addition, Asian Americans from homes where English was spoken had scores on psychological well-being variables comparable to those found in Anglos. A similar comparison of Hispanic-American (N=37) with the Anglo students (N=89) showed that Hispanics, as a whole, differed from Anglos only in having lower agreeableness scores. More highly acculturated Hispanics (N= 22) and Anglos were both less avoidant and higher in seeking social support than less acculturated Hispanics (N=15).

Ethnic minority group members often face problems in adapting to the values and customs of the dominant culture. Prejudice and discrimination present major obstacles so that it is predicted that psychological well-being should be lower among ethnic minorities than for Anglos, as a whole. In addition, for immigrants, loss of ties and roots with their native culture may create initial distress and lower well-being for some minority group members.

However, by changing attitudes and behavior toward those of the host culture, well-being of immigrants might improve since they would eventually "fit in" better with the host society. Acculturation may enhance psychological well-being because the acquisition of the language, behavioral norms, and values of the host society allows minorities to adapt to and become accepted by members of the dominant culture. It is hypothesized that within an ethnic minority group, those who are more acculturated will score higher on measures of psychological well-being.

In a review of the literature on mental health and acculturation among Hispanics, Rogler, Cortes, and Malgady (1991) found studies that support both views. Some studies found that greater acculturation was related to poorer psychological well-being while other studies showed that higher acculturation was associated with better adjustment. A few studies found a curvilinear relationship, suggesting that a balance between two cultures is achieved with an intermediate degree of acculturation.

The present study used college students to examine further the relationship of acculturation to psychological well-being among Asian-American and Hispanic-American students in comparison to Anglos. Atkinson (1989) found that more acculturated Asian Americans were more likely to recognize personal needs for professional psychological help, to be tolerant of the stigma associated with psychological help, and to be open to discussing their problems with others. Similar findings were reported for Hispanics by Warheit, Vega, Auth, and Meinhardt (1985) who examined the relationship between acculturation and mental health among Hispanics in the United States. They found that English speaking Mexican- Americans showed less symptomatology than Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans. On the basis of past research, we expect that as acculturation increases, scores of ethnic minorities on psychological well-being will

be more comparable to those of Anglos.

In the present study, the measure of acculturation was the use of English as the primary language spoken at home. Those who use, are familiar with, and prefer to speak English at home were considered acculturated compared to those who use their heritage language in the home. Griffith and Villavencio (1985) found English spoken at home was an effective way to measure acculturation.

METHOD

Subjects. The subjects were 173 male and female undergraduate students from California State University, Long Beach, divided into 5 groups: 21 acculturated Asian Americans, 26 non-acculturated Asian Americans, 15 acculturated Hispanic-Americans, 22 non-acculturated Hispanic-Americans, and 89 Anglo Americans. For both Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans, the Anglo Americans served as a control group.

Procedure. The subjects were required to fill out questionnaires consisting of several widely used psychological scales with established reliability and validity:

1)The Coping Strategy Indicator (Amirkhan, 1990) is a 33 item questionnaire about how people cope with specific stressful problems. Three 11 item subscales, problem solving, avoidance and seeking support were identified.

2)The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980) is a 20-item 4 pt. rating scale designed to assess variations in feelings of loneliness.

3) The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1967) is a 25 self-report measure of agreement with self-descriptive statements in the following areas: social, academic, family, and personal.

4) The NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1986) is a 180-item measure involving 4 pt. ratings on five major dimensions of normal adult personality. Only two dimensions were included in the present study: neuroticism and agreeableness. Neuroticism examines psychological adjustment and deals with worrying levels. Of the six subscales,

vulnerability was used. Agreeableness assesses the quality of interpersonal orientation along a continuum from compassion to antagonism.

RESULTS

Asian-Americans

Comparisons among the Asian-Americans showed significant differences in avoidance, F (2, 131) =10.21, P <.001). As shown in Table 1, the non-acculturated Asian-Americans used avoidance as a coping strategy more than the acculturated Asian-Americans and Anglos.

Asian-Americans were shown to be more easily distressed than Anglos, with higher scores on neuroticism, F (2, 121) = 6.61, p <.001. However, the acculturated Asian-Americans had neuroticism scores comparable to the Anglos, as shown in Table 1.

Significant differences were found in self-esteem, F (2, 125) =16.49, p <.001. Table 1 indicates that acculturated Asian-Americans showed higher esteem than non-acculturated Asian-Americans. Finally, Table 1 shows that non-acculturated Asian-Americans were more lonely than acculturated Asian-Americans and Anglos, F (2, 122) = 4.13, p <.02.

Insert Table 1

Hispanic-Americans

Significant differences in social support seeking were obtained, with Anglos reporting more coping through social support than Hispanic-Americans, F (2, 121) = 4.73, p <.01. As Table 1 shows, acculturated Hispanic-Americans reported scores comparable to Anglos, with both groups relying more on social support than non-acculturated Hispanic-Americans.

Significant differences in avoidance also occurred, F (2, 121) = 4.00, p <.02, with the non-acculturated Hispanic-Americans using it as a coping strategy more than the acculturated Hispanic-Americans and Anglos, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that acculturated and nonacculturated Hispanic-Americans agreeableness

scores were comparable. However, Anglos scored higher than Hispanic-Americans, as a whole, on agreeableness, $F(2, 119) = 4.20$, $p < .02$.

DISCUSSION

Anglos generally had higher well-being than either Hispanic-Americans or Asian-Americans, although the specific areas of difference varied with each group. Anglos had better scores than Hispanic-Americans on agreeableness and better scores than Asian-Americans on self-esteem, loneliness, neuroticism, and avoidance. Within each ethnic minority, higher acculturation was associated with better scores on most measures, scores which often matched those of Anglos and suggests that as acculturation occurs, well-being may increase. In contrast, previous studies (e.g., Rogler et al., 1991) that showed acculturation was associated with lower well-being involved community rather than college populations. Community samples are older, overall, than college students and likely to be less acculturated.

One unresolved question is whether the various scales, developed with predominantly Anglo populations, measure the same underlying constructs for minority groups. If they do not, it would be misleading to assume that the minority groups had lower well-being. Markus and Kitayama (1991) postulated that Anglos and many minorities such as those of Asian and Hispanic heritage have different self construals, with Anglos focused on individuality and these minorities centering on interdependence. One implication of such differences is that the definition of well-being may also differ for Anglos and for minorities.

The present research does not answer these issues but, however, is still valuable in demonstrating that Anglos and minorities should not be assumed to score similarly on these scales; further research is needed to determine the causes of such differences.

REFERENCES

Amirkhan, J. H. (1990). A factor analytically derived measure of coping: The coping strategy indicator. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59, 1066-1074.

Atkinson,D. G. (1989). Asian american cultural identity and attitudes toward mental health services. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 36, 209-212.

Coopersmith, S. (1967). The antecedents of self-esteem. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman.

Griffith, J. E., & Villavencio, S. (1985). Relationships among acculturation, sociodemographic characteristics and social support in Mexican American adults. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 7, 75-92.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. Psychological Review, 98, 224-253.

McCrae, P. R., & Costa, P. T. (1986). Personality, coping, and coping effectiveness in an adult sample. Journal of Personality, 54, 385-406.

Rogler, L. H., Cortes,D. E., & Malady, R. G. (1991). Acculturation and mental health status among Hispanics. American Psychologist, 46, 585-597.

Russell, D., Peplau, L. A., & Cutrona, C. E. (1980). The revised UCLA Loneliness Scale: Concurrent and discriminant validity evidence. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39, 472-480.

Warheit, G. J., Vega, W. A., Auth, J., & Meinhardt, K. (1985). Psychiatric symptoms and dysfunctions among Anglo and Mexican Americans. In J. R. Greeley (Ed.), Research in community and mental health (p. 3-22). London, JAI Press.

Table 1

Comparison of Anglos and Hispanic Americans

Group	Anglo	Accult. Hispanic	Non Accult. Hispanic	Accult. Asian	NonAccult Asian
Variable					
Social Support	25.02	24.60	20.95	23.56	26.09
Avoidance	19.59	20.46	22.47	20.10	23.61
Problem Solving	25.18	26.86	25.36	26.60	26.16
Agreeableness	47.89	43.71	44.05	46.35	41.80
Extraversion	121.88	119.50	114.90	120.71	110.58
Neuroticism	87.21	93.23	82.11	95.45	103.55
Self-esteem	73.36	66.93	65.80	63.61	48.96